

[Human Rights & International Politics Programme 25-26]

External Examiner's Comments

General Comments	
Overall, the feedback provided is generally thorough, appropriately aligned with the assessment criteria, and demonstrates meaningful engagement with the dissertations. Across both examples, the feedback broadly supports the differentiation in awarded grades. However, there are some inconsistencies in its balance, tone and developmental value. For the higher-performing dissertation (which received an A2), the feedback identifies substantive strengths, including the clarity of the research question, engagement with interdisciplinary literature, methodological sophistication and coherence of the argument. These observations are well supported by the submitted work. However, the feedback is overwhelmingly positive, offering little critical commentary or indication of areas for further development. For the lower-performing dissertation (which received a D3), the feedback is more diagnostic, identifying weaknesses in referencing, conceptual clarity, organisation and argumentation. These criticisms are generally substantiated by the dissertation, and the feedback appropriately acknowledges some positive qualities. Nevertheless, greater emphasis on constructive, actionable recommendations would enhance its educational value.	
Comments on Scripts reviewed	
Matriculation	Observations and Adjudication

	Bodies of Evidence: Assessing the Evidentiary Significance of Mass Grave Characteristics in the Reconstruction and Judicial Interpretation of Genocidal Violence I think the first marker's positive assessment is appropriate given the content of this dissertation. The research question is clearly formulated and systematically addressed through a coherent two-stage methodology integrating forensic anthropology and judicial analysis. The interdisciplinary literature review is comprehensive, while the comparative framework demonstrates originality, independent judgement and critical engagement. The dissertation also demonstrates considerable analytical sophistication, effective synthesis of complex evidence and a persuasive, appropriately qualified argument. Its interdisciplinary contribution and overall execution warrant classification within the excellent category. These strengths satisfy the grading scale's criteria for excellent performance, making the A2/21 completely appropriate. Gendered Governance and Global Policy Incoherence: Women's Human Rights in Sudan's Wartime I feel that the first marker's concerns about the absence of an explicit research question, weak attribution of the five governance gaps, inconsistent referencing, repetitive organisation, and an under-specified documentary-analysis method are well-observed and accurate. The bibliography contains errors, and the dissertation frequently asserts claims rather than demonstrating how particular documents support them. These shortcomings justify a fairly poor grade. However, if I had graded this, I would probably have gone a bit easier in my assessment of how well the dissertation advances its claim that state-centred global protection frameworks are poorly suited to Sudan's wartime collapse, while women's grassroots organisations provide alternative forms of governance. Although this argument is certainly unevenly developed and not as well supported as it could be, it recurs throughout, and the author cites at least some relevant feminist and postcolonial scholarship touching on reformist, decolonial and pragmatic positions. With this in mind, I would recommend considering a slightly higher of D1/11 because I think the dissertation does demonstrate "a modest understanding of the subject matter."
	 Signature Date October 11. 2026
	Please use extra sheets as necessary

[International Relations Programme 2025/26]

External Examiner's Comments

General Comments	
Across the seven dissertations I reviewed, the quality of written feedback is generally good, demonstrating careful engagement with the submitted work and an appropriate differentiation between levels of academic performance. The feedback is largely specific, substantive and consistent with the strengths and weaknesses evident in the dissertations. Markers demonstrate particular attention to research focus, engagement with literature, theoretical development, methodological rigour, and the distinction between descriptive and analytical writing. A notable strength is the willingness to identify substantive academic shortcomings, particularly regarding research design, case selection, critical engagement, and evidential support. Feedback on stronger dissertations is generally appropriately positive, while identifying areas for further development. Nevertheless, some variability is evident in the balance, tone and developmental usefulness of the comments. Certain higher-marked dissertations receive overwhelmingly positive feedback with relatively limited constructive criticism, whereas feedback on weaker submissions can be disproportionately lengthy and occasionally overly critical in tone. Greater consistency in identifying specific, actionable improvements would enhance its formative value. Overall, the feedback provides a credible and generally well-substantiated justification for the marks awarded.	
Comments on Scripts reviewed	
Matriculation	Observations and Adjudication

Central Asian Workers in the UK Seasonal Worker Scheme: Protection and Vulnerability

I feel that the first marker's assessment is accurate, and the dissertation demonstrates several characteristics of study worthy of an A-range grade. It establishes a clearly defined research question, addresses its three subsidiary questions systematically, and maintains a coherent argument across the migration cycle. The author's engagement with relevant scholarship is extensive, while the integration of government, institutional and civil-society evidence demonstrates considerable independent research. Applying Mantouvalou's theoretical framework to the experiences of Central Asian workers also provides a meaningful analytical contribution. The recognition that positive worker experiences can coexist with structural vulnerability also demonstrates critical sophistication. With this in mind, I think the assigned A3/20 is the correct grade.

Norwegian Peace Engagement: The Interaction of Normative Commitments and Strategic Interests in Sri Lanka and Colombia

Having reviewed the dissertation, the marker's feedback and the prescribed grading criteria, I consider the assessment accurate and the awarded grade of A4/19 to be justified. The dissertation demonstrates excellent engagement with relevant scholarship, a clearly formulated research question, and a coherent comparative research design. The analysis of Norwegian peace engagement in Sri Lanka and Colombia is well structured, extensively referenced, and offers a persuasive interpretation of the interaction between normative commitments and strategic interests. I agree with the first marker's noting of certain weaknesses concerning occasionally overly descriptive analysis and inconsistent application of role theory. In addition, I noticed that, despite utilizing process tracing, the dissertation offers relatively limited systematic testing of competing causal explanations. In light of the grading criteria, I think this dissertation demonstrates sufficient critical thinking, independent judgement, and originality to merit classification as excellent, though with a few notable flaws. I, therefore, support the A4/19 grade.

A Comparative Analysis of the United Nations Security Council and the EU's CSDP in Addressing Climate-Induced Migration

I think this dissertation demonstrates a strong understanding of the relevant literature, a clearly articulated research question, and an ambitious, coherent theoretical framework. Its comparative examination of the UNSC and EU CSDP offers valuable critical insights, particularly through the conceptualisation of the "Mandate Trap" and "Fortress Trap". These qualities support the marker's positive assessment of its originality, analytical ambition and academic presentation. The feedback provided by the first marker appropriately identifies weaknesses concerning theoretical depth, methodological transparency, empirical substantiation, and referencing. However, I also feel that more attention could have been

provided to the limited demonstration of systematic discourse analysis and the tendency to advance significant claims about institutional intentions and climate-related migration without providing sufficiently robust supporting evidence. Given this issue, I consider this dissertation to be a borderline case, making a grade of B1/17 appropriate as well. However, I think that its strengths ultimately make the assigned A5/18 grade defensible, so I am totally fine with it remaining as the assigned grade.

Paralysis at the Security Council? Legitimacy, Sovereignty and Great Power Management in International Society

I think the grade of B3/15 is broadly appropriate and consistent with the grading criteria, although aspects of the feedback appear somewhat generous. The dissertation demonstrates a very good understanding of the English School, particularly the contributions of Bull, Buzan, and Clark. Its research question is clearly articulated, and the argument linking Security Council paralysis to competing conceptions of sovereignty, legitimacy, and great-power responsibility is coherent and sustained. The marker's positive assessment of theoretical knowledge, structure and overall focus is therefore justified. The identified weaknesses are also substantiated. Although qualitative textual analysis is explicitly mentioned, methodological procedures, case selection, and analytical criteria are not explained as well as they could be. The comparative chapter is also underdeveloped, while the potentially original concept of "verbal solidarity" has not been operationalized adequately. Furthermore, several grammatical problems, referencing inconsistencies, and occasional insufficiently substantiated claims undermine the quality of the dissertation's analysis and make it underserving of a higher B-range grade.

Her Voice Matters Too: The Role of Women and Women's Movements in the Development of Modern-Day Peace

I think the first marker's feedback is generally fair, constructive and consistent with the dissertation's strengths and weaknesses. The dissertation demonstrates substantial engagement with relevant scholarship, clearly articulated research questions and detailed empirical knowledge of Northern Ireland, Liberia and Colombia. Importantly, the discussion offers meaningful cross-case synthesis concerning women's political mobilisation, gendered power structures and the inadequate implementation of peace agreement provisions. Nevertheless, the marker correctly identifies significant weaknesses in theoretical development, critical engagement with literature and methodological rigour. Although the dissertation identifies a diverse-case comparative approach, its analytical framework and explanatory expectations remain underdeveloped. With this all of this in mind, I feel that the assigned grade of C2/13 is absolutely correct.

Across the seven dissertations reviewed, the quality of written feedback is generally good, demonstrating careful engagement with the submitted work and an appropriate differentiation between levels of academic performance. The feedback is largely specific, substantive and consistent with the strengths and weaknesses evident in the dissertations. Markers demonstrate particular attention to research focus, engagement with literature, theoretical development, methodological rigour, and the distinction between descriptive and analytical writing. A notable strength is the willingness to identify substantive academic shortcomings, particularly regarding research design, case selection, critical engagement, and evidential support. Feedback on stronger dissertations is generally appropriately positive, while identifying areas for further development. Nevertheless, some variability is evident in the balance, tone and developmental usefulness of the comments. Certain higher-marked dissertations receive overwhelmingly positive feedback with relatively limited constructive criticism, whereas feedback on weaker submissions can be disproportionately lengthy and occasionally overly critical in tone. Greater consistency in identifying specific, actionable improvements would enhance its formative value. Overall, the feedback provides a credible and generally well-substantiated justification for the marks awarded.

An Analysis of BRICS Nations and their Initiatives to Challenge Western Dominance through Independent Payment Systems and De-Dollarisation

I consider the feedback partially justified but the awarded grade of C3/12 a bit harsh. The first marker correctly identifies weaknesses in the dissertation's structure, particularly the placement of the methodology chapter, insufficient substantiation of the research gap, and limited originality in its empirical contribution. The reliance on secondary evidence and insufficiently substantiated medium-term predictions also warrant criticism. However, I feel that the feedback underestimates the dissertation's analytical coherence and critical engagement. The first two research questions are not entirely irrelevant since they establish the motivations and causal mechanisms underpinning BRICS initiatives. Furthermore, the dissertation demonstrates a reasonable amount of subject matter knowledge, engages with relevant scholarship, and develops a sustained, evidence-based argument distinguishing payment infrastructure diversification from the displacement of dollar dominance. Chapters 6–7 demonstrate meaningful, if somewhat underdeveloped, critical analysis, and the conclusion addresses the overarching research question convincingly. I recommend revising the grade to C1/14, reflecting good performance with identifiable shortcomings. Although the dissertation does not consistently demonstrate the originality and methodological sophistication associated with higher grades, I think its analytical strengths warrant greater recognition than the original assessment provides.

	Stress Testing and Strategic Buffer: The Role of Hainan Free Trade Port's Cross-Border Capital Flow Regulatory Innovation in Sino-US Financial Competition <i>Please note: I am not certain which programme this dissertation belongs to. But, given its content, I presume it fits best in this programme.</i> I think the first marker's principal concerns are substantially justified. The literature review identifies a plausible research gap but relies heavily on assertions rather than sustained critical engagement with existing scholarship. The empirical chapters largely describe regulatory developments without sufficiently precise referencing or systematic documentary analysis to substantiate claims concerning institutional learning and financial resilience. Particularly concerning is Table 7.2, which acknowledges that source verification remains outstanding. Furthermore, its reported annual growth rates for 2024 and 2025 are inconsistent with the underlying figures. These constitute significant methodological and evidential weaknesses. I think aspects of the feedback may be slightly overstated. Chapters 4–5 establish (at least some) relevant theoretical foundations, while Chapters 6–9 explicitly address the research sub-questions. The dissertation demonstrates moderate conceptual understanding, analytical coherence and awareness of limitations concerning causation, scalability, and external financial dependence. Based on the feedback, I am not certain whether these positive aspects of the dissertation received sufficient recognition. Of course, this is merely my subjective assessment, and I am not an expert on the topic of this dissertation. Nevertheless, against the grading criteria, I think that D1/11 is defensible, particularly given the inadequacies in evidential substantiation.
	 Signature Date October 11, 2026
	Please use extra sheets as necessary

[Political Communications Programme 25-26]

External Examiner's Comments

General Comments	
Having reviewed the four dissertations alongside their corresponding marking reports, I consider the feedback to be generally appropriate, substantive and broadly reflective of the quality of the work submitted. Across the sample, the first markers demonstrated a willingness to recognise academic strengths while identifying shortcomings in theoretical engagement, research design, analytical depth, and the development of arguments. The feedback generally provides credible justification for the grades awarded. Particularly commendable is the specificity of the feedback in several reports. Nevertheless, there is some variability in the quality and presentation of feedback. Overall, the feedback is thoughtful, appropriately critical and largely developmental, although greater consistency in precision, presentation, and explicit alignment with assessment standards would further strengthen the marking process.	
Comments on Scripts reviewed	
Matriculation	Observations and Adjudication

Oppositional political imagination on the topic of Russia's political futures in the content of Russian exiled oppositional media after the death of Alexei Navalny

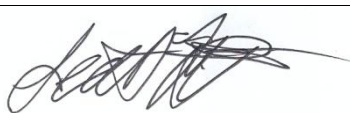
I consider the awarded grade of B1/17 to be broadly appropriate and defensible. The dissertation addresses a clearly articulated research question, demonstrates extensive engagement with relevant scholarship, and employs a well-justified qualitative methodology. Its three analytical themes are coherently developed, supported by empirical evidence, and accompanied by transparent documentation. These strengths satisfy the criteria for a very good performance – in line with the B1/17 grade. At the same time, the first marker rightly identifies insufficient integration of the empirical findings with wider theoretical debates. Moreover, I think the conclusion predominantly summarises findings rather than systematically establishing their broader scholarly contribution. Beyond this, the author's claims regarding methodological originality require stronger justification. These issues lead me to agree with the first marker's assessment that this is a very good dissertation but not one warranting an A-range grade.

Soft Power of the Crown: To what extent did BBC representations of the British monarchy contribute to the maintenance of British hegemony among Scottish audiences in the period preceding the 2014 Scottish independence referendum?

The feedback broadly reflects the dissertation's strengths, particularly its substantial engagement with relevant scholarship, clearly articulated research question, and thoughtful integration of nationalism, hegemony, and political communication theories. The first marker appropriately identifies weaknesses in theoretical synthesis, methodological justification, and the coherence of the argument. However, I also think feedback is insufficiently critical of several methodological and evidential limitations. Most significantly, although the research question concerns British hegemony among Scottish audiences, the dissertation cannot establish audience reception or demonstrate that BBC representations influenced national identification. While the author acknowledges this limitation, its implications for answering the central question warrant greater attention. With these positive and negative features in mind, I think the assigned B2/16 is quite reasonable.

'Guess who's back on the news': The framing of non-formal politics

This topic was certainly interesting to an Irish reader! The feedback provided by the first marker is substantially accurate. The dissertation presents a clearly defined research question, demonstrates substantial engagement with relevant scholarship, and undertakes an appropriate qualitative analysis of 94 news articles. These strengths indicate sound subject knowledge and independent research competence. I think the first marker rightly identifies an imbalance between the extensive, predominantly descriptive literature review and the comparatively underdeveloped discussion. Although the central finding concerning the dominance of a 'controversy' frame is clearly established, insufficient

	analytical attention is devoted to differences between media outlets and the wider political implications of their coverage. However, I found the feedback concerning the research question's breadth less convincing, given that the dissertation provided fairly clear parameters for its empirical scope. Overall, I think the grade of C1/14 appropriately reflects the grading criteria, recognising substantive knowledge and research competence while acknowledging insufficient critical engagement, analytical sophistication and methodological rigour to justify a B-range grade. The Geopolitical Price of Peace: Material Salience and Discursive Positioning in the Ukrainian Settlement Discourse Having reviewed the dissertation, examiner's feedback and grading criteria, I consider the feedback substantially accurate. On the positive side, the dissertation demonstrates a clear research focus, substantial engagement with relevant scholarship, a coherent analytical framework and a systematic examination of 25 Russian state communications. Its comparative analysis produces a credible argument supported by empirical evidence. However, the first marker correctly identifies significant methodological limitations, particularly the inability to establish an independent interaction between material salience and ethno-linguistic composition. The limited case selection, insufficiently differentiated hypotheses, referencing inaccuracies and textual repetition also warrant criticism. Taking this into account, I think the existing grade of C1/14 is warranted.
	Signature  Date October 11, 2026
	Please use extra sheets as necessary